



Town of Bennington

Communications Coordinator Report — July 25, 2022

Building Community

This month we saw an incredible outpouring of community support for Finley, a very young girl fighting cancer. We are proud of the work done by our civic organizations such as the VFW, FOE, Lions, Elks, Moose, the business community, and the residents of our town in support of efforts like this. In particular, Norm LeBlanc and the VFW deserve credit for providing leadership in rallying the community.

We note this in part because while the town can and does support the efforts of civic groups as a whole — we cannot support fundraising efforts for individuals or specific families in order to avoid the appearance of favoritism. Can we do more as a town to support civic groups and the efforts they support? I hope so. I will seek input from civic groups to learn what we can do better. We each have our roles, but what we know is that when everyone works together, great things can be accomplished.

Willow Park Playgrounds:

We are on schedule for the installation of the new playgrounds. A final presentation of the playground designs back in May was cancelled due to the illness of our vendor's presenter. We discussed doing a ground breaking ceremony instead, but due to the inability to get a firm start date for demolition, we decided to plan for a ribbon cutting ceremony instead. The current start date for site preparation is July 28 or 29. Once that work begins we will do a series of updates on progress and we will be able to schedule a final ribbon cutting for sometime in August.

For more information about the Willow Park playgrounds renewal project and process please visit the Town website page on Willow Park located at: <https://benningtonvt.org/willow-park/>

Citizen Outreach:

I met with eleven citizens over the last month on a variety of issues and concerns. There was one public record requests to my office.

Community Outreach

I worked with Jerry Albert, the Bennington Rotary, the Battle Monument, and the town to coordinate a combined fourth of July celebration that included a reading of the declaration of Independence at the Monument, a car parade with riders from the VFW and American Legion to the town office, and a bell ringing ceremony with a 14th honorary ringer for Vermont. This year the Bennington Historical Society was chosen by the Rotary for that honor.

I am helping promote "Come Alive Outside", a program featuring a summer passport where kids and families do activities and explore their community and then enter to win a prize. I also assisted with outreach for the PFOA settlement workshops and reminders to the community to sign up, as well as new outreach around the Bennington Lead Line project.

Most recently we are very concerned about the lack of rain this summer and we have done the first in what will be a series of posts about conserving water. The hope is that by building awareness and encouraging water conservation early we can avoid more serious restrictions later.

A.T. Community and Business Outreach

Planning is being finalized for the July 30 "Bennington Trailfest" to be held at the Bennington Community Center (Rec Center) from noon to 3 pm. There will be live music, free food, activities, and informational tables. Free to the public. Several businesses have joined as A.T. Community Business supporters who will be recognized during the event. The BBC is also a supporter of this effort. A trivia contest with prizes, lawn games, and hiker related skill workshops will also be included.

250th Anniversary Planning:

An initial meeting of a 250th planning committee for Bennington and the surrounding region occurred on June 30th. If you are interested in being part of the planning effort please contact me at 802-445-1335 or

by email jspivak@benningtonvt.org. The purpose of the committee is to start planning for specific events and to explore what “big ideas” might be possible for 2025-2027, to interface with the statewide 250th commission, work with local educators and the SVSU to support teachers in bringing 250th related curriculum and materials to our classrooms, and to collaborate with regional partners. As part of the regional collaborative effort, I will be attending the Castleton Historical Society meeting for their discussion on 250th planning for Ethan Allen and the attack on Fort Ticonderoga.

Website Update:

Work on the new town website has moved from the design stage to the coding stage. Once complete, the content of the existing site will be transferred to a beta site for testing and navigational fine tuning. We are on track for a launch of the new site in late August or September.

Organizational Collaboration:

I attended the Continuum of Care (CoC) monthly meeting and I support the effort by the BCCH and GBICs on the idea of a strategic plan for the Bennington CoC.

Facebook POST OF THE MONTH:

Credit for our post of the month goes to Jon D’Amour and the team at the waste water treatment facility!

It goes without saying that our sewage system is one of the most important parts of our infrastructure. And it is also probably one of the least understood.

A big investment was completed pretty recently, in 2020. The project could have cost upwards of 17 million, but was kept to 9 million by doing a lot of the work in house and by upgrading parts of the project over time rather than all at once. The team deserves our thanks not only for keeping costs down, but for the excellent quality of their work.

But more investment will be needed. The team is currently studying “bio-chemical oxygen demand” (BOD) levels, possible changes in the state permit, a new sand filter, and simply dealing with rising costs from inflation.

Building awareness of these needs is important for creating support from the community to tackle the challenges that we will face in the future.

